

SUMMER 2007 ISSUE 8

Welcome to the Summer issue of British Waterways' London Quarterly Newsletter, keeping you informed of issues and projects of interest on the 100 miles of canals, rivers and docks in our care.



MP Emily Thornberry and AM Murad Qureshi, pictured with local cyclist, launch towpath safety campaign

SAFETY CAMPAIGN CALLS FOR 'TWO TINGS'

Following a series of physical works to improve safety on the Regent's Canal, in May with the help of MP Emily Thornberry and AM Murad Qureshi, British Waterways launched a new Code of Conduct for towpath users with a 'Two Tings' campaign. The project is part of an ongoing London-wide British Waterways programme to make towpaths safer, more attractive and accessible to the thousands of people who use them every day.

Funded by Transport for London and British Waterways, the £446,000 Regent's Canal Safety project started in February with a programme of physical improvements from Victoria Park to Camden Town, including towpath resurfacing, trial chicanes, rumble strips and new signage.

The new Code of Conduct, which has been well received by all canal users, has been promoted through a series of 'Two Tings' towpath events, plus posters, leaflets,

adverts, banners and a PR campaign.

The message for cyclists is that pedestrians have priority and to use a bell giving 'Two Tings' when approaching pedestrians, passing them slowly, giving them space and to ride at a sensible speed. The message for pedestrians is to listen for the 'Two Tings' and allow cyclists to pass.

Emily Thornberry, MP for Islington South and Finsbury, says: "The towpath is one of the most beautiful corners of my constituency and is therefore very popular.

I support British Waterways in this programme which is all about making sure that we share this space properly and treat one another with respect."

Murad Qureshi, Chair of the London Waterways Commission, adds: "The Code of Conduct and 'Two Tings' campaign will go a long way in resolving a major source of tension along our otherwise tranquil towpaths in London."



On a bitterly cold day last January I took a boat trip around the Olympic Park with Sebastian Coe and Tony Blair. Even at the bleakest time of year it was clear that the waterways in the area had something special and I have followed with interest the work that British Waterways and the Olympic Delivery Authority have been doing to unlock their potential.

What delights me most is the imaginative and environmentally sustainable way in which these rivers are being revived to play a part in all the main phases of the 2012 Games: helping to move construction traffic cleanly and efficiently by barge; providing a world-class setting for the event itself; and creating the central feature for an emerging 'Water City' in the legacy phase. I, like British Waterways, believe that the work we are doing here will have a ripple effect across London and the rest of the country that will benefit generations to come.

Tessa Jowell MP
Minister for the Olympics
and London



HOOKED ON FISHING

British Waterways teamed up with Thames21 and docklands anglers in June to host a day out fishing in West India Docks for the All Party Parliamentary Angling Group (APPAG).

The day had an excellent turn out, including Jim Fitzpatrick MP, Jon Cruddas MP, Bill Wiggin MP, Martin Salter MP (pictured centre), Charles Walker MP, Lord Brookeborough, Murad Qureshi AM and a number of local councillors. Students from nearby George Green School helped to land a respectable haul of silver bream, perch and roach during the day.

Martin Salter MP, Chairman of APPAG, said: "Angling is one of the UK's most popular sports and is enjoyed by three million people of all ages and backgrounds. This event gave us a great opportunity to promote the sport just a stone's throw from the Palace of Westminster and with the stunning backdrop of Canary Wharf and London's docks."

BW is the UK's largest owner of coarse fisheries and almost six million angling visits are made to its canals, rivers and docks each year.

STATUS REVIEW

The Government has asked British Waterways to undertake a review of its current structure, and consider the best model for ensuring the continuing growth of the waterway network.

The review will look at how BW's institutional form and financial structures might be strengthened or adapted to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Much of the legislation governing BW was established under the governments of Harold MacMillan and Harold Wilson in the 1960s. The waterways have been transformed since that time. The explosion in leisure boating and canal tourism, the completion of major canal restoration projects and the growth in waterside regeneration all have implications for the way that BW operates.

BW has appointed, subject to contract, KPMG and Merrill Lynch as its preferred advisors, with a brief to consider a range of possible options: from keeping the status quo, to adopting more innovative models for a public interest body. Despite some of the speculation in the national press, neither the Government nor BW support the idea of privatising the network. The review is expected to be ready for consideration by the BW Board and Government around the end of the year.

BOOSTING VISITORS

Nationally British Waterways is aiming to increase visits to its waterways, with a target of doubling them by 2012. To help achieve this, British Waterways has appointed marketing and PR agency McCann Erickson Central based in Solihull. The agency is currently working on a national marketing plan with the first campaign due to roll out this Autumn.

Giving an extra boost to London, VisitLondon is again running a summer campaign promoting the capital's waterways.

Britain's waterways are visited by more people, and enjoyed for a wider variety of activities, than at any other time in their history. Half the population of the UK lives within five miles of one of British Waterways' canals or rivers and over 300 million visits are made to the national 2,200-mile network each year. £1 ½ billion is spent by visitors to the waterways each year on goods and services and 54,000 jobs are supported. For each £35,000 spent by visitors to the waterways, one full time job is created.



HELPING OTTERS RETURN

With the help of Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, British Waterways has been taking steps to improve otter habitats on the Grand Union Canal in West London, including building a canalside otter holt close to Harefield.

Leela O'Dea, ecologist for British Waterways London, explains: "Thanks to the work of conservation groups like the Wildlife Trusts, numbers of otters, one of Britain's best-loved mammals, are on the increase after decades of decline. There's welcome evidence that otters are returning to the London area, including the Colne Valley and the Thames at Brentford."

"The Grand Union Canal connects the two river catchments so we are taking steps to further encourage their recovery in the area by improving habitats for otters along the canal. As part of an action plan for otters, we are providing somewhere for them to breed, improving their chances of finding food by creating fish refuges and encouraging dense vegetation growth which offers places for them to rest."

If you have any views on the topics raised in this newsletter, or would like to discuss British Waterways' work in London, then please contact Ed Fox, corporate affairs manager, on 020 7985 7226 or edward.fox@britishwaterways.co.uk. You can also visit our website at www.britishwaterways.co.uk.